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PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION
& EDUCATION

CHRISTIANITY and CRISIS

A Christian Journal of Opinion

Failure at the Summit

The disastrous collapse of the summit meeting in Paris before it had been properly started has shaken the whole world and left no one unscathed.

The chief cause of the failure was certainly the irresponsible opening address of Premier Khrushchev. So insulting were the remarks of the Russian boss that President Eisenhower was bound to resent them, both personally and officially. But we certainly gave Mr. K., who had labored so long to draw us into the summit meeting, his chance. The blame for the failure falls partly on us because we risked the reconnaissance flight over Russia one week before the meeting. All nations have intelligence services, but there is always a risk of being caught. We compounded the error by not telling the truth until the Russians produced incontrovertible evidence.

Perhaps a greater mistake was the failure to heed the advice of the late Secretary of State, Mr. Dulles, not to go to any conference without some agreement beforehand. An even greater mistake was made in the reliance on personal diplomacy, to which all the nations have become addicted, forgoing the usual careful impersonal diplomacy through regular channels.

It is of little value to recount now that Mr. K. had his own reasons for torpedoing the conference — his own military organization opposed his dis-

armament proposals, and he had failed to budge the Western allies on the Berlin issue. What better way could a shrewd politician take to cover an ultimate defeat at home and abroad than to make a major issue out of the unfortunate U-2 incident? The Russian Premier simply outfoxed us. He forced us into a summit conference in spite of our reluctance and then used a major miscalculation of our intelligence service to wreck the conference when it suited his purposes.

American diplomacy has not suffered a worse disaster in the history of our nation. The disaster is the more serious in a nuclear age when the world is at the edge of the abyss of a nuclear holocaust. The loss of national prestige is probably not as serious as the destruction of the minimal bridges of understanding across the awful abyss of ideological confusion that separates the two power blocs.

The "relaxation of international tensions" in which both sides were presumably engaged will seem in retrospect to have been a hollow understanding. The only remaining hope is that the Russian boss may have so overplayed his hand that sober world opinion will react against his whole adventure. It is a minimal consolation, to which we must cling, at least until history unfolds the total consequences of the disaster.

R. N.

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CURIOUS COMRADES

FROM MANY PARTS of the land comes news of increasing noise from the far, far right. Perhaps, as these columns recently suggested, the reason is that spokesmen who can no longer command an audience in the political realm are wistfully seeking listeners in the churches. The complete irrelevance of pietistic individualism is evident in the fact that it raises its voice at just the time when both parties in Congress have decided to work for some form of medical insurance for the aged.

The fundamentalist form of conservatism is not alone. Readers of *The New York Times* were astounded recently to learn that Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, of all people, was preaching that Protestantism "has become so broad that it is shallow." Finding too much "sweetness and light" in religion today, Dr. Peale maintained: "The only true Protestants left in the United States are those who believe in the Bible and in Jesus Christ the Saviour and in salvation from sin. . . . The old, strong narrow Protestantism that made the United States is a crying necessity today."

Those words, from a man whose sermons and books have been about as innocent of biblical doctrine as any on the horizon, call for explanation. Dr. Peale gave it—he was attacking the "social gospel." It appears to Dr. Peale that the leaders of Protestantism today believe that "the salvation of mankind is through some political mechanism."

We wonder what Protestant leaders Dr. Peale has met in the last several decades. A few hours with the writings of our foremost theologians or in social action committees of denominations and the National Council of Churches would show a completely different story. These leaders say again and again that salvation is God's gift in Christ, not the work of political mechanisms. They go on to say that the Christian, in gratitude to God, acknowledges the divine lordship over all the world and seeks to serve God in all that he does.

Social reaction binds together a curious comradeship of disparate theologies. And this plea to keep the church out of the life of society has a long, if not very dignified, history. It echoes the complaint of Amaziah, who wanted to drive Amos out of Bethel, a "temple of the kingdom." Contemporary reactionaries are repeating the arguments of those who, prior to the Civil War, urged the churches not to get into politics by opposing slavery.

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We need not, however, go to the past for examples of the disastrous results of isolating religion from the life of the body politic. The Soviet Government, in its frequent protestations of belief in religious liberty, declares its willingness to live with any church that keeps to its rituals and avoids social criticism.

Although the ill-assorted league of reaction has been left far behind by history, it still has money. J. Howard Pew, prominent industrialist and active Presbyterian, has recently warned his church that some of his friends, who dislike the social positions of the church, are not contributing their money. We congratulate *Presbyterian Life* (May 15 issue) for its courteous yet forthright answer to Mr. Pew and for its suggestion that he tell those friends that the church and its General Assembly "are not for sale."

Recent theology has rightly warned us that there is no direct line from biblical faith to social policies in complex situations. These are times for it to repeat its counter-affirmation: that there can be no wall between faith and concern for the world that God loves and seeks to redeem.

R. L. S.

AID FOR THE AGED

THE DEBATE about medical care for the aged has quite suddenly called attention to long-neglected problems. The two-party system and the proximity of the election make it essential that both parties vie with each other to produce some constructive steps toward solutions of these problems. Cynicism about the motives of politicians who must attach themselves to one measure or another should not hide the fact that this is an excellent example of the working of democracy.

When people whose real needs are neglected have the vote, they can often force the politicians to take their needs seriously once the issues involved have been clarified and dramatized. Here also is a very good result of a senatorial investigation, that of the McNamara committee, that caused journalists and politicians to face these issues squarely. Whatever one may think of the various measures proposed, even the most conservative of them would establish precedents that are already opposed by Senator Goldwater and the American Medical Association.

The broader problem involved is the general economic plight of retired people. The responsibility of the three-generation family for its older mem-

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bers has been greatly reduced in recent decades. Constricted housing and the quite natural preference for independence on the part of both the older and the younger generations have tended to push retired parents out of the immediate family circle. They tend to gravitate toward settlements of older people and thus find themselves cut off from youth and from normal community life. The spirit of a "youth culture" crowds them out.

Obviously, the economic problems here are not the most important ones but they are the easiest to identify. After acquiring the habits and expectations that come from prosperity, the aged enter upon a very pathetic kind of poverty when, upon retirement, they often must subsist on severely reduced incomes or pensions from social security. This is one of the fruits of our highly successful capitalistic individualism!

The lifelong poverty of other societies is cruel, but there is a special kind of bitterness about this poverty after one is sixty-five and has been accustomed to the allurements of prosperity. The establishment of social security is a great boon. As a supplement for the security that is provided by the three-generation family it would perhaps be ample. But the decline of this larger family and its care for its members has been so rapid that millions of older people are dependent on their small pensions, and these are inadequate.

The other major problem is that of medical care for older people. It is obvious that, with the present cost of medical care, any serious or long-continued illness will force persons who have small savings and who live on pensions into debt. Or it may cause them to neglect their health in order to avoid going into debt and becoming a burden.

The legislative efforts that have been speedily improvised to meet this situation before November may constitute a breakthrough on the whole question of the responsibility of government, especially the Federal Government, for the health of citizens. Here we have costs that individuals or families cannot meet from their own resources. The many private plans for insurance hardly touch the problem of catastrophic or chronic illness.

It is perplexing that the medical profession has always been so complacent about the cost of medical care, for who can know more about the subject than the doctors themselves? Doctors as individuals are known to many of us to be wonderful in their care for patients, but when organized as a profession they are last-ditch defenders of an economic individualism that is cruel to patients. The collective image of the medical profession does not do justice to the individual doctor. Hospital costs skyrocket, and yet hospitals are on the edge of bankruptcy and often underpay their non-professional staffs.

We prefer a bold attack on this problem that makes use of social security and, at the same time, extends social security to those not yet covered. Some compulsion is needed if the coverage is to be economical and efficient and if people are to be protected against the cost of illnesses they do not foresee and which are hardly voluntary. We also see no reason why the profit-making insurance companies should gain by new legislation that is enacted in behalf of the elderly. But even the less adequate legislation that is proposed would be a step forward and would commit the Government to a new attitude toward medical care that is long overdue.

J. C. B.

DR. ALEXANDER MILLER

As this issue was in preparation, we learned with profound sorrow that Dr. Alexander Miller of Stanford University suffered a fatal heart attack on May 15. He was a vigorous spokesman of Christianity to our time because of his buoyant faith and his experience in many parts of the world and in many walks of life. Long a friend of this journal, he was recently elected a Contributing Editor.

In these columns Dr. Miller was recently engaged in a continuing discussion of Christian

ethics. There follows here a reply to him from Dr. Paul Ramsey. Since no one enjoyed healthy theological controversy more than Dr. Miller, it seems appropriate to print this article, as scheduled, with regret that we are deprived of Dr. Miller's witness and insights.

We who knew "Lex" Miller well, even as we grieve our loss, thank God for his life and influence. We take comfort in the faith we share with him: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

THE EDITORS

Faith Effective Through In-Principled Love

PAUL RAMSEY

ICOME not to praise Professor Robert E. Fitch. I have not read his article on "The Obsolescence of Ethics" (*C & C*, Nov. 16, 1959). Still there is enough incoherence in Alexander Miller's attempted reply ("Unprincipled Living: The Ethics of Obligation," *C & C*, March 21, 1960), and between the substance of his article and its title, to demand analysis.

The present-day erosion in the field of disciplined Christian ethical reflection has gone so far as to justify the remark that to read any *two* books on the subject is difficult and confusing to the mind. In this instance the puzzlement arises from reading only one article. By itself it raises the fundamental question whether there is any common body of practical knowledge in the church that may be designated "Christian ethics," or even any agreement on the method by which an elaboration of Christian moral judgments might be given. Just how is the Gospel a lamp unto our feet and a guide on the pathways of the modern world?

Mr. Miller seems to call upon Mr. Fitch to put up or shut up—"either to succor us all by elaborating a 'law' that is not another yoke of bondage, or join us in the patient work of developing a methodology in Christian ethics that is true to the character of the Gospel." With respect to the latter alternative it is worth stating that the so-called "contextualism" now struggling to be born proposes a "methodology" in Christian ethics in about the same sense as Quaker silence may be called the action of liturgy. Both these statements are true enough; but just as silent meditation makes a ritual of the lack of ritual, so contextualism makes an ethical method of the lack of it. With respect to the first alternative, its force may be directed against Miller himself—if I have not entirely misunderstood his article—as much as it can be required of any other Christian ethicist.

For Miller speaks of Christian morality as a "style of life," an "ethics that represent the mutual obligations incumbent upon a covenant folk." Moreover, on Miller's own showing, this style of life is not known altogether from within the *koinonia*. There is some sort of "abiding importance" to the criticism I advanced against Reinhold Nie-

buhr's notion of a love "so beyond law that it fails to do justice to that structure of human selfhood which is accessible to reason, a description of which has been attempted in certain versions of natural law, and which must play some part in determining any calculation of the human good." Miller writes, moreover, that he is "more and more inclined to believe that at this point we do need something like a morphology of man," and he adds: "It may be that we ushered Aristotle out too summarily . . . , and ". . . one marriage is in salient respects much like another," *etcetera*.

Of course, we are not told how all this is consistent with the outlandish statement—which, by the way, makes a "principle" out of an exceedingly practical maxim that has only limited usefulness—that "if you want to serve man in terms of what is good for man, you arrive at what is 'good' *not by way of any systematic morphology of man*, but rather simply by asking him what he wants" (italics added). Nor is the substance of the ethical view Miller *begins* to elaborate consistent with his opening refusal, because of the sinfulness and the pervasiveness of sin, "to accord to reason the competence to identify man's nature and need that would be implied in the traditional version of natural law, even in its restrained form as we have it in Aquinas."

Such a refusal of natural law reasoning, it is true, may be made consistent with many a "morphology of man" or "the structure of human selfhood accessible to reason," according to variations in the meaning that is assigned in the original refusal to the "traditional" versions of natural law that are rejected.

Yet he is a poor reasoner, indeed, who while rejecting "principles" declares that "for most situations this kind of *jus gentium calculus* will do," and who in rejecting the "rational natural law" puts in its stead "a prudential calculation reinforced and corrected by an innate impulse of justice and compassion." He does this without informing himself and his readers that there are notable exponents of the theory of natural law in Christian ethics today who affirm that the so-called natural law manifests itself *first* in *jus gentium* judgments (i.e. judgments fully in the context of facts); that even then it manifests itself not first to human reason but in man's inclination to justice or dis-

Dr. Ramsey, author of *Basic Christian Ethics*, is Chairman of the Department of Religion at Princeton University.

inclination to injustice, declaring, moreover, that this is the essential truth of the traditional theory they want to conserve and restate, not revise.

Finally, what are we to make of Miller's assertion that "habits have the advantage over the older rules in that bad habits are susceptible of being corrected while rules are more difficult to revise"? One might reply that anyone who believes that about habits has never attempted to break one—especially if it is a social habit, or a matter of *mores* or *ethos*, which both Miller and Aristotle emphasize as of the essence of morality. It would be more to the point for the problem of ethical analysis to say that the moralists of the past who have stressed the significance of habit for the continuity of character and behavior have been precisely the ones who also summarized and clarified human ethical wisdom by writing treatises on law.

In any case, it can be said with certainty that if Miller progresses much further in the direction he is going, i.e., if he elaborates a fuller body of substantive Christian ethics, he himself must bear the burden of showing that this is not another "yoke of bondage." Then anyone is at liberty to send him his own appeal that he "join us in the patient work" of developing a Christian ethic true to the character of the Gospel, yet not without principles, rules, law, habit and a morphology of man. Only in appearance is faithfulness to the Gospel-ethic to be secured by lack of rigor and completeness in elaborating the substance of every crucial moral decision.

Apostles of the New Look

The fact is that recent Christian contextual ethicists have been content with Pyrrhic victories, obtained by absent-mindedness, or by failure to make a part of their conscious thought the principles that are actually present. Not all contextualists strip the situation of Christian ethics down to "faith and facts." Miller and Joseph Sittler have a real place for the quality and reality of *agape* in the Christian's faith-response to God in the midst of fact-analysis. Other representatives of this school seem to think that the war against normative principle must also be prosecuted against ethical theory that makes Christian love central in man's faith-and-fact responses. Even Sittler carries on a mock battle against a "love-ethic," while simultaneously affirming that God's "given-love bears forth its giving-love in the womb of faith."

Bonhoeffer is today one of the chief apostles of the new look in ethics; and deservedly so, for more

reason than the fact that his ethics is incomplete. (Also Bonhoeffer's tragic death is the only legitimate excuse for leaving an ethics incomplete, if one has the power to do otherwise, or for accepting incoherencies in what is said about the subject.) Yet it is impossible to take seriously his undertaking to rest Christian ethics wholly on biblical "mandates" together with a sensitive appraisal of the facts—when throughout this appraisal he uses the critical category of the "unnatural."

In another founding document (James Gustafson's chapter in *Faith and Ethics: The Theology of Richard Niebuhr*), we come upon the statement that we are "more certain of the rightness of radical action in desegregation than we are in fiscal policy. . . . On certain issues action can be revolutionary because its rightness is clear. Yet we can never assume the absolute rightness for all people of any action. . . ." This last sentence is undeniably true: application of principle has always been acknowledged to fall in the midst of relativities and necessary compromise.

Politics is the science of the possible and the art of deferred repentance. But of *what* is it proposed that repentance be deferred? If action flows from faith and the facts, provided the latter are sufficiently analyzed, why not be as sure of the morality of a given fiscal policy as of desegregation? If the rightness of desegregation is "clear" to a Southern contextualist, this is because he has in his head certain principles not derived from experience alone, but logically prior to the problematic situation, in terms of which he judges it right to reshape and transform race relations as we experience them to be. Social policy and law cannot be reduced to mere "artistic" contrivance.

"Art" (or "making" a different social order to see from the looks of it or from the results whether we like it or not) is one sort of practical activity, as Aristotle knew, distinct from the "doing" involved in ethical or political action. Are principles for the latter derivable only, even if sufficiently, from (in Miller's words) "that active and incarnate love whereby God gathers a people for himself and by that same love enmeshes them in a profound mutuality of obligation that is for pure love's sake"?

Some answer this question in the affirmative. Others refer us also to principles of a more "prosaic character." But he contradicts himself who answers affirmatively (for the sake of an apparent uniqueness in his account of the Christian ethical outlook) and yet, at the same time, suggests the need

for a "morphology of man" and points to "an innate impulse of justice and compassion."

As John Calvin said, we are justified by faith not without works: "we are justified, not without

works, yet not by works" (*The Institutes*, III. xvi. 1). We are justified by faith not without principles: we are justified, not without principles, yet not by principles.

The Methodist General Conference, 1960

ARTHUR J. MOORE, JR.

A GENERAL CONFERENCE of The Methodist Church resembles nothing so much as the Democratic National Convention. There is the same feverish air of excitement; the same unfortunate tendency to lapse into the more florid forms of rhetoric; the same unpredictability of action. Most important, there is the same cliff-hanging drama in the resolution of whatever issues happen to be agitating the church at the time.

Since both the Democratic Convention and the Methodist General Conference meet in the same year, this may seem like too much of a good thing for many people of delicate nerves. Particularly since the major issue of both meetings is also apt to be the same—segregation. But such are the facts of life.

As everyone knew well in advance, the issue of the 1960 General Conference, held April 27–May 7 in Denver, Colorado, was the continued existence of Methodism's Central (Negro) Jurisdiction. More specifically, it was the report of the Commission to Study the Jurisdictional System (the "Commission of Seventy"), which recommended "no basic change" in the jurisdictional system, including the Central Jurisdiction. Readers of *Christianity and Crisis* who read Walter Muelder's excellent description of that report and how it was prepared ("Methodism and Segregation: A Case Study," April 4) are familiar with the basic proposals made by the Commission. In essence, it was an artfully contrived compromise, not too satisfactory to any one but (it was hoped) not too unsatisfactory either.

And so it proved to be. There were floods of impassioned oratory but the votes were never even close. The moral: "You can't beat something with nothing." Opponents of the report had no clear strategy and most of the proposals for ways to abolish the Central Jurisdiction were worse solutions than its retention. The only modification that seemed reasonable and had any chance of passage was that of President Harold Case of Boston University to set a target date of 1968 for the abolition of the Central Jurisdiction. When this lost by a good margin, it was clear that the report was adopted. (Clear, alas, except to some of the Southerners who wanted a speech in the record for future episcopal elections and wasted two whole days in thoroughly useless debate.)

Mr. Moore is Associate Editor of *World Outlook* and a member of the Board of Sponsors of this journal.

Oddly enough, the report (for all the abuse it has received) is a good, workmanlike job whose proposals if carried out fairly may be of great use. The Methodist Church now has the machinery for desegregation on a voluntary basis. All it needs is the will, and where that is not present, it is doubtful that it can be created by a General Conference.

But if this was a victory for moderation, many more such victories and the Methodist Church is undone. The racial issue and sectional strife have become a neurosis within Methodism (as within the United States) that prevents attention being paid to many items of great importance. Methodism's great besetting sin, the lack of any coherent doctrine of the Church, makes it literally unable to act effectively in the racial situation and many others except on a basis of compromise and expediency. As the Drew Faculty statement on the Commission report so truly put it, "the spirit of compromise is substituted for the ministry of reconciliation." Decisions so reached may be tolerable to those already members of Methodism, but they can hardly set forth the body of Christ to the watching world.

Another unfortunate result of the preoccupation with the Commission's report is that other actions were frequently taken without adequate debate. A horrid example of this was the decision to endorse Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State (POAU). By clever use of the prestige of Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam and by putting all its focus on the legal activities of POAU and playing down its more doctrinaire and controversial "educational work," supporters of the organization had secured a recommendation for endorsement from the Coordinating Council of the church. Most of the opposition came from the official church agencies (such as the Board of Social and Economic Relations) whose staffs are more familiar with activities in the church-state field. With the resounding backing of the Coordinating Council, the proposal was adopted with little debate and opposition. (It was helped by the fact that the original proposal for direct financial assistance had been deleted by the Council.) In the opinion of some observers, the "morning-after" from this decision will be a "beaut."

Another change that was not adequately debated was the liberalizing of the rules for remarriage of divorced persons. The new rules are less legalistic and vastly less clear than the old rules, but there seemed little interest among delegates in discuss-

ing the subject one way or the other. And so it went with many issues.

It was, in short, another General Conference—not too good and not too bad. If this report (and press reports generally) seem to dwell on the errors, it is because the errors point to fundamental questions within the Methodist Church—questions whose solution is vital to Methodism and to Protestantism. Methodists in the United States have had a great deal of historical luck that has helped to make them the country's largest single denomination (even though the Southern Baptists are now breathing down their necks). They are one of the very few denominations that is a truly nationwide church. But their luck may be running out and surely will unless close attention is paid to some of the deep questions raised by their present situation, which this General Conference so well illustrated.

CORRESPONDENCE

The Candidates' Religion: A Secular View

The writer of this letter is a consultant to the Fund for the Republic's study of Religion in a Democratic Society.

TO THE EDITORS: I have followed with great interest your comments on the religious issues in the current contest for the Democratic Presidential nomination. Although my own intellectual and emotional commitments are secular rather than religious, I find myself in substantial agreement with your judgment.

It seems plain that much of the opposition to Senator Kennedy rests upon ill-informed prejudice against his Roman Catholic faith. His public positions on the issues to which Catholics have been especially sensitive—aid to parochial schools, separation of church and state, and birth control—have demonstrated an independence of clerical influence that should satisfy any open-minded person. Residual religious opposition can only be founded on an impalpable suspicion, a belief in the conspiratorial intentions of a Catholic candidate and his church that the recent evolution of Catholicism in this country and the political record of John Kennedy alike refute. It does none of us credit that if Senator Kennedy is nominated it will only be because political leaders have concluded that the gain in Catholic votes will more than offset the loss of Protestant ballots.

However, the intense public discussion of Catholic-Protestant tensions has overshadowed the more general issue of exclusion of many groups from the Presidency. In practice, custom and prejudice combine to render ineligible for consideration women, Jews, Negroes, up to this point Catholics, and professed agnostics or atheists. On the assumption that other groups do not lack for spokesmen, I shall confine myself to a few comments on the position of the last group, the agnostics and atheists. Their situation has been recently described

by Vice President Nixon, who frequently reflects the lowest common denominator of popular opinion.

In an appearance at the National Press Club, reported in *The New York Times* of May 2, 1960, Mr. Nixon declared that no one who did not believe in God could or should be elected President. I quarrel here not with the "could" which is descriptive of an existing situation, but with the "should." What immediately alarms in statements of this sort is the quiet adoption of a religious test for public office, in violation of the letter and the spirit of Article VI of the Constitution which contains the words, "...no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States."

But the calm reception that greets statements of this variety identifies alarming public confusions about the character of our political institutions, the appropriate question to ask of our candidates, and the relation between religious belief and political action.

What legitimate questions do our traditions of church-state separation and opposition to religious tests enable us to ask? We are entitled to examine the public positions of our candidates as carefully and even as harshly as we choose. In the normal course of events aspirants to high office have made records as legislators or administrators. In addition, their speeches and press conferences commit them to still other courses of action. In these public rites of selection, the candidate's hesitations, equivocations, and disingenuities are all obvious to the interested eye and ear.

And any citizen who judges candidates by their public acts and public declarations soon learns that no ready correlation between religious belief and political complexion exists to simplify his judgment. The political spectrum does not conveniently divide itself according to the faith professed by the politician. There are Catholic liberals and Catholic reactionaries, Protestant libertarians and Protestant bigots, and secularists of all dispositions. Only the innocent believe that Catholic, Jewish and Protestant theology contains a clear set of recipes for political action.

We properly judge our candidates not only according to what they do but also according to what we conceive them to be. We sensibly elect men according to our evaluation of their potentialities as well as of their past performance. In the case of the Presidency, the job is so much larger than any other position a candidate may have held that past success is less adequate than usual as a guide to selection. Moreover, even the best-informed citizen must admit inability to judge all

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issues. Time and technicality conspire against his best efforts. At this juncture he is likely to rely upon a personal judgment of the candidate, in the hope that the candidate will choose the best experts, follow the best advice and arrive at the best decisions.

Surely, the theist might interpolate, here is the point where it is relevant to ask whether a candidate believes in God. But is it? I have heard Reinhold Niebuhr quote with approval Mary McCarthy's remark that religion makes good people better and bad people worse. The epigram admirably illustrates my point, for it suggests what should be immediately apparent—we must first identify the good people and the bad people, and there is precious little that we can infer from an individual's religious belief.

Presumably we require of our leaders the ordinary virtues in extraordinary quantities, which is to say that we hope for paragons of courage, calmness, intelligence, incorruptibility, compassion and justice. We can relevantly inquire whether a man believes in God only if we can demonstrate that such a belief has a verifiable connection with these virtues. Are the godly better men? Are they better political leaders? What evidence answers the questions affirmatively? What theology makes the claim for its communicants that simple belief in

A Reminder

By now virtually all of our readers have received packets containing sample copies of *Christianity and Crisis*. If you have not already done so, we hope you will share them in the near future with those friends who would find the journal a stimulating addition to their reading.

In Recent Weeks

We have received a number of inquiries from our readers about the retirement of Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr. We are pleased to report that Dr. Niebuhr's retirement from Union Theological Seminary will not affect his contributions to *Christianity and Crisis*.

God inevitably implies superior character and superior behavior?

All of this is so obvious as to approach the platitudinous. It should be completely unnecessary to say anything of this sort in public. If it is necessary, as I believe it to be, it is because in our land religious belief of a usually superficial kind has become one of the convenient substitutes for judgment of the comparative merits of our political men.

If a candidate goes to church, if he loves his wife, children and dog, and if he interpolates God freely into his speeches, he is taken to be the better man for these patriotic exercises. We appear to be not far from the situation where candidates will claim God as their ghost-writer. It should scarcely be necessary to recall that Hitler liked children, Goering loved dogs and Goebbels was a devoted family man to suggest the infirmities that attend judgment of character according to superficial attribute and behavior.

Bad men have worshipped God. Good men have failed to believe that he exists. The springs of human behavior are not so readily divined by devices so simple as statements of theistic belief. Sensible political questions concentrate on what candidates have done and what they are likely to do. Only the shoddy moralism of the Eisenhower Age makes it so easy to identify complex issues of mingled good and evil as simple matters of right and wrong, and complex human behavior by the simple touchstone of belief in God.

ROBERT LEKACHMAN
New York, N.Y.

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